

## STILLWATER COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MINUTES

**Notice:** These minutes reflect the proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners. The official minutes were approved and are on file with the Clerk and Recorder (MCA 7-4-2611(2)(b)).

### REGULAR MEETING SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

**Present:** Commissioners Maureen Davey and Gerald W. Dell, Members; Lori Dobitz, Administrative Assistant; Jerry Friend, Treasurer; Joe Morse, Finance Specialist; Carol Arkell, DES/GIS Coordinator; and Clifford Brophy, Sheriff. Others Present: Rick Hanners, Stillwater County News; Coralee Hicks and Jay Heitmann. Absent - Commissioner Dennis Shupak.

**Public Comments:** Public Comment on matters within the Commissioners jurisdiction pursuant to §2-3-103, MCA, public comments will be accepted on any public matter that is not scheduled on the Agenda. None were heard.

#### **Regular Business**

**Final Budget** - Hearing concludes as referenced in 7-6-4036 MCA, and Resolution 2015-32 for the consideration of adopting the Final Budget for Fiscal Year 2015-2016, and setting Fiscal Year 2016 County Mill Levies.

Joe Morse, Finance Specialist, presented the preliminary budget, if adopted will become the final budget for 2015-2016. Joe recapped the preliminary budget stating we've levied all the mills that were available for us to levy in the aggregate mills. With our taxable values increasing this year those available mills went down. He said we levied an additional 15 mills from prior years for the road fund mills set aside for the areas outside the incorporated town of Columbus, with the purpose of supplementing the road department budget for the West Rosebud Project. He said we have 44.06 mills county wide that we are carrying forward from prior years. We are not adding to that this year, he said. After using 15 mills, we have an additional 15.8 mills for use from prior years from the Road and Fire Fund. Those Road fund mill values is approximately \$480,000 which was available August 3, 2015, when we received the values from the Department of Revenue.

Commissioner Davey read the preliminary budget resolution prepared for adoption. Following the reading, Commissioner Davey **MOVED** to adopt **Resolution 2015 - 32**, adopting the final budget for FY 2015-2016. Commission Dell **SECONDED**. Discussion followed.

**Discussion** - Nancy Rohde, County Attorney, said this is her first year with the budget process as an elected official and said she would like to make comments with the understanding she is not attacking the commission or trying to throw them under the bus. She asked if the final budget includes the salaries for our employees. Rohde said she understood from Joe, as done in the past,

once the budget is approved - then in September or October the commission adopts, by resolution, the compensation boards recommendation for elected officials, then whatever percentage if there is going to be some raise for the employees, done by resolution. Is that how it goes? Commissioner Davey responded no. Morse explained the elected officials have their raises done as part of the compensation board recommendations, which is put in place by a separate resolution. Nancy Rohde confirmed, when asked, that she is on the compensation board. Morse said the salaries for the other employees have not been acted on officially and that is done later with a different resolution. Rohde said that is what she is referring to. She said as she is reviewing this process, and she has called MACo who is aware she is asking this question, she doesn't think the Commissioners have statutory authority to do a resolution after the fact. She said salaries are part of the budget and should be included as done with the compensation board. She intends to get an answer to this question before we do this process for future years she told the commission. *As an elected official, and I think I can speak for the department heads, we would like to be more involved with you as we are deciding what we are going to do for our employees,* she said.

Sheriff Brophy said he agrees with what Nancy Rohde said. I would insist that we be more part of setting our wages and salaries. We'd have a more uniformed, decisive process to do that - not an arbitrary process that changes each year, Brophy said. I am going to demand that the county officials and department heads be a part of that, he said. Commissioner Davey responded that she is always up for a clearer, simpler, improved way of doing things and very receptive to that, however, this is the first time we have heard these kind of comments. As far as she was concerned, the commissioners have always followed all of the laws. She addressed Nancy Rohde, County Attorney, stating that when she (Rohde) was deputy county attorney she was involved in the budget process year and this never came up. Commissioner Davey stated through the years we have been following the laws and taking guidance from our finance person and in the past it has gone smoothly, but if we need to improve things she is certainly up for that for reasonable consideration. Nancy Rohde said in doing this budget process, the commission is doing a good job, these commissioners are putting heart and soul into the budget, this is what they are here for, they are responsible for, and they do not take this task lightly, and she thanks them for that. She said *the commission, with her budget, has been very agreeable to doing what I want, in giving me the things that I have asked for and I do appreciate that and thank you.* Commissioner Davey said *as county attorney, I am glad you brought up that part of our authority is the budget. We approve the budget,* Davey said.

**Vote** - Commissioner Dell called for a vote on the adoption of **Resolution 2015-32**, setting the final budget for FY 2015-2016. Motion passed. Commissioner Dell said salaries will be considered for adopted at the next agenda meeting.

### **Special Issues**

1. Stillwater River Road - Rockslide update - Commissioner Davey said the commission received a few emails from residents and there was an article in the Billings Gazette. She said this rockslide is being compared to Beartooth Pass and Zimmerman Trail in the emails received. Both of those slides or rock events were taken care of with State funds and maybe City funds, she said. *I don't know what it cost to repair those two things, it could be the whole Stillwater County budget, not the Road budget, but the whole Stillwater County budget to fix this slide. The County Attorney is advising the commission along with several engineering firms involved and the Road Department. We are certainly not experts on rockslides but part of our duty is safety to our citizens, and that has*

*been the prime concern with that road, she said.*

2. 2015 Fire Season - Current status of fire conditions and/or fire restrictions within the county. Action will be taken if conditions warrant.

Carol Arkell stated as of this morning, sixty-four burn permits have been purchased through the new permitting system. She said two fires occurred over the week-end, one Sunday morning early in the Columbus area which was suppressed quickly, and the other fire on Locomotive Road. DNRC was called in for mutual aid to locate the fire and provide initial attack. The fire consumed seventy acres and it is reported it is 100 percent contained. She is recommending a red flag warning for today and continue with the closure on the burn permit system for safety reasons.

Carol Arkell said DNRC had plenty of resources to provide mutual aid and take lead on the Locomotive Fire and they volunteered to do so. She also wanted to thank all residents of Stillwater County for being aware of the fire conditions.

### **File Items**

#### **Commissioners**

- a. Montana Department of Revenue (DOR) - Notice of temporary local office closures Sept. 21-25, 2015.
- b. National Association of Counties (NACo) - Confirmation of Commissioner Davey's nomination as member of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee for 2016. Commissioner Davey **MOVED** to place the file items to file. Commissioner Dell **SECONDED**. Motion passed.

**Meeting Adjourned:** Hearing no further business, Commissioner Dell adjourned the meeting at 9:27 a.m.